2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, Mu Ngonde

maids and always carries a mat or cloth to screen her face from her father and his contemporaries, her father's full sisters, her older brothers,[1] and her 'mothers-in-law' (*abakamwoma*).[2] These she must fear and respect (*akatile*) and so avoid. Her father-in-law and his brothers she avoids altogether from the time of her engagement, or at least after she has reached the age of 8 or 9. Her companions do not *akatile* with her, though those of them who are already betrothed will, of course, avoid their own fathers-in-law.

During the period of seclusion the girls have two specific tasks: to weave the fine mats used as beds, and to fetch firewood. Every bride should take to her husband's home at least one fine mat (*ubweyasa*) which she has made herself, as well as several coarse ones (*imisyolo*),[3] and weaving a fine mat is a lengthy task, occupying a skilful woman a month. Each girl weaves for herself, but the firewood that each must fetch is stacked in the bride's mother's loft. The bride also occupies herself hammering out bark-cloth, pleating it for the strip worn between the legs, and decorating bark-cloth belts (*vide* plate 5), so that she may have the fresh ones required during the ritual, and a supply to take with her to her husband's; but this work is not emphasized as an obligation: rather it is a recreation. Women take great pride in the decoration of their belts—we watched several brides making them and handing them round for the admiration of their fellows. The maids may work in the fields if required to do so, but the bride herself does not, and 'she gets fat because she does not have much work to do'. The whole ritual normally lasts about three months, but if, for some reason such as a pressing need to go out to work, the husband is in a hurry for its completion, various acts may be telescoped. The time-table depends primarily on when the marriage-cattle and food for the various feasts are ready.

From the time of first menstruation until she does it ritually, a bride should neither wash nor oil herself. The prohibition is felt to be a very onerous one and some girls now break it, but women said 'in the old days we did not wash'. 'Girls nowadays are more cunning. We were afraid.'

[1] Some informants denied that she avoided father's sisters or brothers. Others insisted that she must avoid them because 'brothers are fathers, and father's full sisters are father'.

[2] I.e. her husband's own mother and other women he calls mother. In this account the plural 'mothers' indicates own and classificatory mothers.

[3] Nyakyusa beds are made of layers of mats laid on rollers between two logs or bowl and fore. One chief's [illegible] was made up of sixty-eight mats.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

323 one will sometimes meet with long strings of men and
48 women, carrying ten to a dozen pots, hawking them
317 round the upland villages, or offering them for sale
at the local market at Tukuyu. The pots made at
[531] Matema are smeared on the outside with a dull red
ochre, and the more artistic potters work patterns in
red, with thin lines around the protruding middle,
and herring-bone or crossed patterns from thence to
lip and base.

353 I once slept in a native house in which there was
a double row of pots, one on top of the other, along
two walls. I was told that they were there for orna-
mental purposes, "just as you white men have pictures
on your walls."

285 Basket work is done everywhere, and a great variety
48 of baskets are made. Immense *ifisuka*, for storing
grain, up to four feet high, and perhaps ten feet in
girth, are to be found in almost every family. Smaller
baskets for carrying goods of all kinds; wide shallow
baskets for sifting grain; others for serving food, and
yet others for drinking beer. The latter are so closely
woven that they will hold water, and are made from
a fine grass, which is found only in certain regions. A
new development of this industry is the making of
articles to European, or native, order; hats, table
mats, baskets with hinged lids and divisions inside,
almost anything can be made if a specimen is given
to the maker as a sample from which he may copy
what is wanted. Basket work includes also the large
and small fish traps in use at the lake or on the rivers.

286 Net making is naturally confined to the lake shore

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Haya FN8

H 342 An indicated above, the floor is covered with grass. Various domestic utensils may be seen, stuck into this weave of plant material.

H 342 178 But this old, beautiful type of hut is very much on the decline. It is costly to make and to keep in repair, and the thick straw roof is, admittedly, highly inflammable. A flying trip round Lake Victoria clearly shows how the straw roofs in the banana groves are being replaced by corrugated iron. This change may even have another reason, viz. the fact that fodder for cattle is in short supply and that the grass for roofs is hard to come by. No doubt, it is a question of time when the fine old Haya hut will have disappeared.

N 114 In the Southern Highlands, where I was given the opportunity to stay for three months at various Danish mission stations, I visited the village round the Rungwe mission, the neighbouring villages of Ilolo and Kikoro, and some villages near the Rutenganio mission station. I made a trip to Lake Nyasa and another to the Poroto mountains. I must admit to a limited knowledge of dressing techniques and of house construction, but I have surveyed a number of houses and sketched their plans and also the furnishings I found in them. The positioning of the various objects has been established.

N 361 [342] 358 The high standard of dwellings of the Nyanyakyusa is truly to be wondered at. The houses, clustered in villages, often along a winding street, lie intermingled with banana and coffee bushes. The houses are large and their interior is clean. Often two or three houses belong to one family, and, if so, will be grouped round a courtyard.

N 342 [324] Even if you could find houses built from sun-dried bricks and fired tiles, most were from bamboo with a grass roofing.

All houses stand on a clay base which, though not very high, no doubt ensures some protection against penetration of ground moisture during the heavy rains of April–June.

N [324] Besides bamboo, sometimes the bole of tree ferns, makala, is used in outer walls. Such tree ferns stems have not the carrying capacity of bamboos, but they are far more resistant to rot. Among the other common features of the existing types of houses, should be mentioned the mud sheds, the size of rolls that from the inside are pressed between the vertical bamboo poles; also, the inner wall is roughcast with a mixture of mud and cow manure; the floor is from tamped clay. In some places you find very fine floors in which a pattern has been rolled into the wet clay; to this end a short length of the stem of the banana cluster has been employed, viz. the length between the scars of the male and the female flowers. Also employed are smaller plaster cans, or an empty corn cob.

N [238] [331] In all houses where women live, there are one or more hearths. The presence of two hearths in one house usually means that the husband has two wives, each with having her own hearth, either in the common house or in a house of her own.

N 359 515 The houses always have a kind of ceiling made from bamboo with mud carried

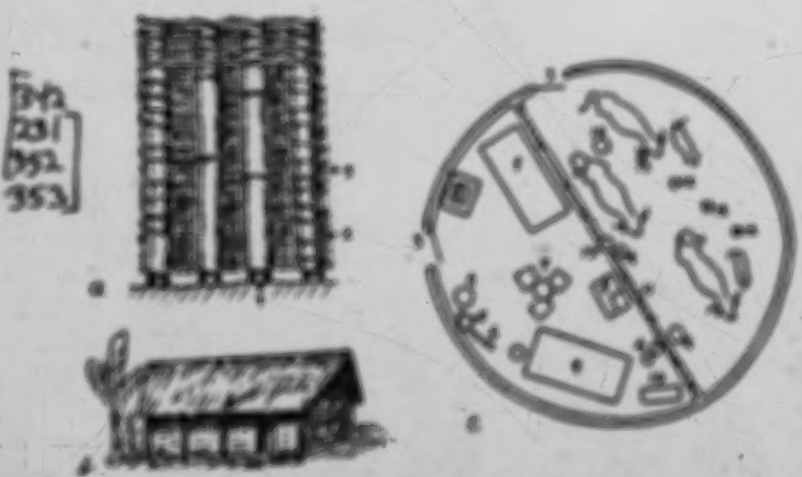
N 342

12: Biegaard E-5 (1955) 1962 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

parts. The partition wall was bamboo and mud. A doorway gave on to the inner part, where Tuhoone had her bed.

There were two hearths, one in each room. The front one was not used. In the outer room was a bed for guests—a common feature of all houses. Tuhoone was thought to be well off, and she had plenty of carrying rings, used by the women when they carry loads, often very heavy, on their heads. The inner room was used for stores, including a number of earthen jars. She had three very fine, slow wools. I saw them outside in the sun, but their usual place was no doubt in the outer room, which had the character of a workroom. Here were the large wooden mortar and its long pestle; also the grinding stone and in a corner the small mat, the *ulupepo*, which is used to take up the newly ground flour. There was also the ladder, used for fetching down firewood from the loft; you could see the hen's nest, and the large water jar with its pointed bottom placed on three stones.

The third image belonged to an eighty-year-old woman whose husband had died. She told me how every day she would fill a fine, decorated bamboo mug with milk for him! These mugs, seen in all the houses, mostly have geometrical



Houses belonging to Maka Ulinyakusa and her husband.

a. Detail of image, outer wall. c, two fine stone joined to bamboo pole—note aperture for liquid measure; e, bamboo pole with plaited fibre stiffings; f, split bamboo—h, Maka's doings. —c. Plan of image. c, bed of the man; c, iron cleats for garments; f, door; g, pole supporting ceiling; h, hen's nest; i, hens and perch for the native storage; j, hearth; k, stools; l, bed of the grandchildren; m, mat from hollowed out trunk; n, low partition; o, pole for tying cattle; q, entrance gate to top of road.

12: Diagaard E-5 (1955) 1982 FNU? Ngonde FNU?
Nyakyusa

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gateposts burned into the bamboos; they are hung upside down so the dust will not settle in them. The bamboo is the natural partition of the bamboo cane.

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The house was standing on high, slightly slanting ground, and like the first mentioned house it was buttressed by a great number of thick bracelets. Incidentally, it seemed to be very old and rickety. Inside, there were a great many posts supporting the horizontal bamboo ceiling and the eaves of firewood. All posts were bifurcated and held the beams solidly in place. The diameter of the house was the usual 6.5 metres, but in this case there was no inner partition. As this woman was very poor, she had no bed, but slept on a mat on the floor. Only very rarely is there no bed in the houses; I remember having seen this only three times.

[353 554]

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The hearth was the usual type: three decorated square stones, rising to a height of 30 cm above the floor, but being sunk 30 cm into the ground. Here they were positioned as one side, to ensure that the cooking pots would not touch fire, and to make for easy escape of the smoke through the doorway. None of the houses have other means of smoke outlet.

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Alongside the wall were calabashes, jars, and baskets, essential for the baskets; and a little away from the wall, the large millstone and its appurtenant smaller grinding stone. A hen's nest was not missing either. Along one side was fixed a small under-ceiling for the storage of small things. Two or three bananas, meant to be for her own meal, were lying on the floor near one of the posts. From the left she reached down a calabash in which she had been carrying her relish. Its inside was of a reddish colour.

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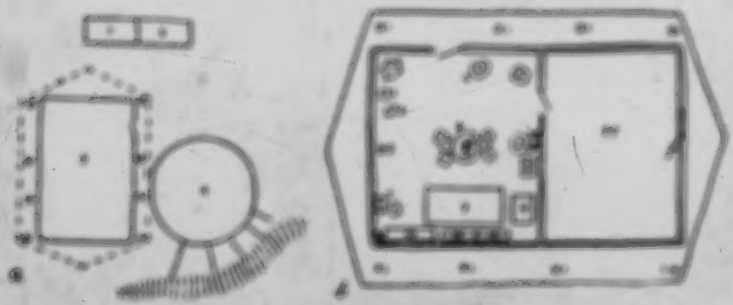

a. Site plan of Mafia Ulwenkwezi's houses. 1, house-ruins; 2, drying-racks for crops; 3, Mafia's deluge with roof supports along sides; 4, crops belonging to Mafia's husband, with buttresses on the ground.—b. Plan of Mafia's deluge (ligated window in back room). 1, hen's nest; 2, stools (small); 3, posts (those going up to ridge of roof are tilted in); 4, large baskets; 5, baskets; 6, clay base round main posts; 7, Mafia's bed; 8, chest; 9, wooden chest; 10, table; 11, back room, having bamboo ceiling carried by bamboo cross beam (concrete posts marked 3); the room is used for storing clothes, etc.; 12, doors.

LC: Diagnard E-5 (1955) 1962 FMU? Ngando FMU? Nyabyuma

342 Another old woman lived in a neighbouring village close by—if possible even more sparsely furnished than the last mentioned.

Common features of the round houses were: their size, the wooden centre-post, the ceiling covering the greater part of the room, the supporting posts for the beams that carry the bamboo joists and the ceiling proper; the building materials bamboo and mud; and the positioning of the hearth slightly off centre.

364 515

The two hearths of Vidal's hut. A clay base surrounds the main posts, that serve to support them. Two hearthstones at either side form the hearths, for they have acting as the cook stove.

178 342 The differences between this range and the original round-type house are: the angle of the wall, here vertical (as opposed to the inclination of the wall of the original house); the entrance (here without ornaments); the door itself also without ornaments; and further the fact that the clay rods placed between the bamboo poles were here not the shape but only the size of rods. The pictures presented by Fiddlehorn clearly show the carefully formed clay balls in the wall.

341 As distinct from the old-type house, this new type of house has no decorations on the inside of the wall, but in some instances decorations are found on the floor.

342 Another type of house, again, was rectangular, often very long, with a ridge-beam roof. In most cases, these houses were buttressed along both sides, and were thus provided with what you might call two verandahs. Sometimes also the gables of the houses had buttresses. The roof projected over the gables, most over the ridge. The roof sagged in the middle, a fact that was already observed by the scholars mentioned. This may be because the ridge-beam is not dry but freshly cut, when it is mounted in its place. During the subsequent drying process sinks [illegible] it will then be brought to sag—as we know from other types of houses.

The house is called an ebloga and is known to be typical of the Banyabyem [illegible] since olden times. Literally, ebloga means stable or confinement, thus presumably indicating its original purpose. There is a full description of this house in Fidle-

12: Stegnard E-9 (1951) 1962 P341? Ngonde P341?
Nyakyusa

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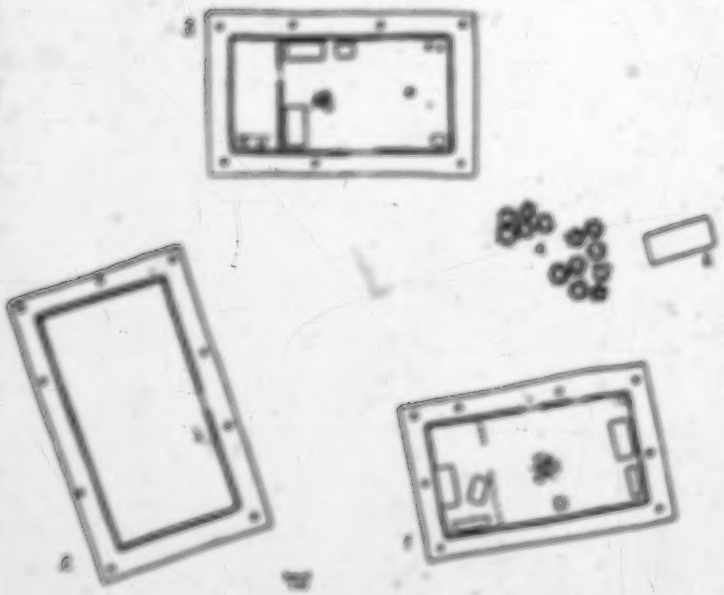

Three houses belonging to one family, situated round a common courtyard, the doors open on to the yard. The village seen is along the back of the house at top. 1, father's house; 2, Rafa's house; 3, Silwa's house; 4, banana plants; 5, fire-trap.

houses existed which were the narrow in length. It had the same width as Mafa's house, approximately 3 metres. The roof was supported by posts along the sides and at the gables.

Two women lived in this house, both married to the same man. Consequently, there were two hearths, the stones of which were cylindrical-conical, broadening slightly at the top. All were decorated. Each woman had her part of the house, both with an outer door, and further there was a door, slightly narrower, between the two parts, and a fourth door to a store-room. No less than twelve posts supported the roof, all reaching to the ridge. The two parts were a bit unequal in size; nearly half of each had the well-known bed for firewood, etc. One part contained beds for the women and her husband (one bed had two straw mats). The children had two beds. The husband had still another house, a short distance away at the foot of a hill, they said. I did not see it. The other woman's room held her bed and a cot.

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The hearths of both rooms were placed in the centre, between two upright posts. Utensils and furnishings did not differ much from the usual: here's some,

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14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

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usa. It is true that one still meets blacksmiths on the outskirts of the villages or some distance away from them (as in the case of the Ndali tribe, western to the Nyakyusa area), but they no longer smelt the iron from ore mined by themselves as in former times. The smith of to-day remelt only scrap iron from disused motor-cars and other machines into tools, hatches, and spear-heads, unless, of course, the natives prefer to buy imported iron-ware. As with the Chaga, also the Nyakyusa smith can only be persuaded to submit to being photographed after long negotiation and a change into better clothes. The blacksmiths I met in the Bundali Mountains, however, made no objections whatever to being photographed at their work. Also women were allowed to attend. But one feature of the ancient Nyakyusa blacksmith's culture has been preserved till the present day: the lower part of the bellows through which the air blast is driven into the fire is still made of wood. This feature has been defined by H. Baumann as an element of the "ancient nigritic culture".

126 326 [184] 178 325

12. Dress. The cloths of the Nyakyusa have changed to a very considerable degree since the beginning of European influence. A comparison of the earliest pictures and descriptions of inhabitants at the northern end of Lake Nyasa with the dress of modern times brings out this point most forcibly. Originally the Nyakyusa went almost naked, adorned only with rings and belts, but nowadays all degrees of compromise with European fashions of dress are to be found, especially near the European settlements and Mission Stations. The most conservative element are, in this case, the women. It is still possible to-day to observe in each village the preparation of the long strips of bark *(elyabi,* pl. *amabi)* commonly worn by the women. The so-called *impandapanda* (Fotheringham: *mlambe)* tree furnishes the dress material. After the bark has been immersed in water, the bast is beaten with wooden instruments and then pulled off from the harder parts of the bark. These tools are like hammers; the flat end of such an implement is furrowed, sometimes with a disk made of horn, and as it produces patters on the bast it is called "*obosimbe*", that which produces patters. These long belts, almost reaching the ground, especially in front, are mostly ruby coloured, but the women sitting in front of their huts manufacture also other types with geometrical (triangular) patterns in yellow and brown forming only girdles *(umpango).* In addition to this minimum requirement in the way of dress some women around the waist also wear copper belts *(manyeta),* made of thin copper-wire, spiraly wound on a core of hairs from the tails of cows. These

291 177 287 291 [531] 291 301 [237]

14: Lehmann E-S (1939)1951 FNI? Ngonde FNI?
Nyakyusa

bells are also worn by men, nowadays below the other clothing. More and more pieces of cotton with imprinted patterns have come into vogue. They are worn around the lower part of the body or below the shoulders or fastened about one of them, and are bought from Indian shops. That this modern fashion, however, is something new in such places which are a little remoter from direct European influence was demonstrated to me when I came through a small village in the environment of Masoko. There by chance I met some young girls carrying a piece of cloth on the top of a long pole as if it were a banner. On enquiry I was told that this "banner" was nothing other than a piece of cloth newly bought by a woman of that village and that it was hoisted on a pole and carried in procession out of sheer joy that this woman had been able to buy it.

Menfolk throughout are fuller dressed, especially when they go dancing. The women, on the other hand, wear their ordinary dress also on such occasions. The dancing costume of the men — only the younger men participate in dancing — consists of a sort of tight-jacket or sweater and wide robes with coloured patterns. The hair is adorned with feathers. At work the men mostly wear only loin cloths or shorts. After work especially the older man wrap their bodies in blankets. It is very seldom nowadays to find even very old men still wearing the former national dress: a bundle of long grass in front and a smaller one behind tied to the waist by means of a string, as I found a man on a solitary spot near Rungwe Station. Little boys go altogether naked untill they are about three years of age. Little girls begin to wear a small *mabi* at an earlier age.

13. Art. One of the most interesting and striking features in the artistic endowment of the Nyakyusa are the decorations on the outer-walls of their huts. The latter are only painted, however, when the exterior of the framework of bamboo is mud covered, otherwise only the wooden doors (*ikifigo*, door) of the huts are painted. By no means every hut or house is painted, but only a limited number in each village, probably depending on the presence and industry of an artist as this art is as in other cases an individualistic one. One such artist was introduced to me in a village near Rutenganio. The ornaments consist in most cases of geometrical patterns in white and black, seldom in other colours, or they represent different sorts of animals, e. g. elephants, horses, cattle, snakes, etc. The richest designs I found in a long extended village on the right bank of the upper Kiwira. In an other case the names of the animals were written in Swahili below

14: Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FNG? Ngonde FNG?
Nyakyusa

the figures. Also bicycles, aeroplanes, motor-cars and other striking objects of the European civilization are to be found represented and concentric white circles adjacent to these drawings or paintings.

14. Houses. Sometimes the upper portion of the framework of the rectangular houses is not fully plastered with mud leaving broad open areas or stripe horizontally or obliquely to the base-line. This may have its origin in an artistic motive and at the same time be useful in ventilating the interior of the hut. The ancient custom of the Nyakyusa to fill out the spaces between the framework of the walls with flat, oval cakes or clods of clay, supported inside the house by a second framework of bamboo (*ucumenge*), has also a decorative effect.

The preparation of these oval sun-dried clay cakes is the work of the women. L. Monteith Fotheringham described this in his "Adventures in Nyasaland" (London 1891, p. 22) with the following words: "The women make the bricks in shape like large eggs by pressing the clay between their hands." The building of the framework of the hut and the thatching of the roof is the task of the men. Nyumba means "the house" in Kinyakyusa as well as in Swahili; *ungenge* is the name for the old-fashioned hut of the Nyakyusa possessing a round bamboo and a framework expanding upwards in diameter. The rectangular hut is called *ikibege* and the smaller rectangular hut used as a store or a fowl pen, *akabege*. It is interesting to note that there is no special word for roof in Kinyakyusa. This part of the hut or house is simply called "the above" (*igulu*). In contrast to this fact the different poles of the roof-structure are specially named according to their position parallel to or at right angels to the ridge of the rectangular houses. *Ukutalika* means to bind the different rafters of the roof together; *imbanda* is the name for the supporting poles of the roof, and *isyungu* for the poles of the framework of the walls.

15. Outfit. Inside the house we find besides the bedsteads (*ikitara*, pl. (*ifitara*) and the household utensils, the grinding-mill (*urwiwa*), consisting of an upper (smaller) and a lower (broader) stone. The flour falls into a basket placed in front of the mill. Sometimes in a corner of the hut a nest (*ikitero*) for a sitting hen on top of a pole is to be found. Outside the house is a place for the sweepings (*urutagililo*). The cleaning of the interior of the houses and also the repairing of the mud plaster is the task of the women, but I saw men cleaning the space in front of the huts. At any case, it must be acknowledged that the cleanliness of a Nyakyusa village leaves little to be desired.